

## THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION'S CODE OF CONDUCT

*This Code of Conduct (Version 1) was formally approved at the Icon Board of Trustees' meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014 and approved by ballot of the membership 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014. This edition of the code replaces the previously used E.C.C.O Professional Guidelines (II): Code of Ethics.*

### **1 Introduction**

The Code of Conduct states the general principles and obligations governing the behaviour of the Institute of Conservation's members, including members who are volunteering or in training. The Code should be read in conjunction with the Institute of Conservation's Professional Standards (Version V 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014) which describe the specific activities of a conservator. From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 the Code of Conduct (Version 1) supersedes the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisation (ECCO) Professional Guidelines.

Members of the Institute are required to abide by the Code of Conduct and need to be suitably qualified, skilled and competent for the tasks they undertake. However, the Institute of Conservation does not seek to dictate to its members in detail the measures by which conservation work may be delivered. A conservator should be free to use his or her judgment to make a considered selection of appropriate, achievable measures that are in proportion to the significance and condition of an object or groups of objects and be free to develop new approaches.

### **2. Purposes of the Code of Conduct**

- 2.1 To explain the professional requirements and obligations that all Icon members, including those who volunteer or are in training, must abide by and promote.
- 2.2 To clarify clients' and custodians' expectations of Icon members: the Icon Code of Conduct serves to underpin members' professional relationships and relationships with the public.
- 2.3 To encourage employing institutions and commissioners to understand the responsibilities and obligations of conservators and to adopt policies and practices that support their implementation.

### **3. Applicability**

All members of Icon, including those who volunteer or who are in training, must abide by and promote the Icon Code of Conduct.

### **4. Icon Code of Conduct**

- 4.1 You must adhere to and apply the Code of Conduct in all aspects of your professional practice and in your role as a member of Icon, as defined by the Institute of Conservation's Professional Standards
- 4.2 You should strive to conserve cultural heritage so that it can continue to be used for education and enjoyment, as reliable evidence of the past and as a resource for future study.
- 4.3 You must have the appropriate conservation expertise and cultural, historical and technological knowledge to carry out the conservation measures you undertake.
- 4.4 You must be aware of and acknowledge your limits of understanding and ability.
- 4.5 If work requires expertise that you lack, or is outside your area of competence, you should not undertake such work (except for the purposes outlined in 4.6) unless supervised by a conservator or specialist with the appropriate level of expertise.
- 4.6 You must inform owners or custodians if a substantial part of the process of conservation of an object or structure includes the additional purpose of developing skills or researching a new

treatment and there is a consequent raised level of risk to the object or structure. You must ensure that the owners or custodians understand this risk and have given you prior permission to proceed.

- 4.7
  - i. You must maintain and enhance your capability through appropriate continuing professional development (CPD);
  - ii. you must keep CPD records of your progress and professional development to demonstrate you have the appropriate depth of conservation expertise and knowledge required to carry out the conservation measures you undertake.
- 4.8 You should only recommend conservation measures or carry out procedures you are willing and able to discuss openly with colleagues, clients or custodians.
- 4.9
  - i. You must create records of the condition of objects before undertaking any conservation measures. Investigations, analyses, decisions made and measures undertaken as well as subsequent results and observations, are documented;
  - ii. you must ensure that a record of pre-treatment condition and conservation measures undertaken is made available to the owner or custodian of the conserved item or structure, together with recommendations for aftercare;
  - iii. you or your organisation must keep all records of pre-treatment condition and conservation measures undertaken, for your own protection or your organisation's, as evidence of pre-treatment condition, of the evaluation of conservation options and of the eventual measures undertaken. You should agree to use reasonable endeavours to ensure your organisation is aware of, and complies with, this provision.
- 4.10
  - i. You must keep records of clients' and custodians' agreements on conservation measures and associated costs;
  - ii. you must inform clients and custodians promptly if discoveries made during the course of treatment require a change from the agreed or contracted plan of work and agree with them any changes to conservation measures and, if necessary, additional costs before continuing the work.
- 4.11 You must ensure that those whose training or activities you supervise or are responsible for, are prepared and equipped appropriately to carry out conservation tasks and that they have adequate support and supervision.
- 4.12
  - i. You must ensure that appropriate permissions have been given by owners and custodians to use text descriptions and images, if required for publication;
  - ii. you must not wrongfully use or plagiarise another person's work;
  - iii. you should give due credit, and specific acknowledgment where appropriate, for work done by others working with you on conservation projects and research.
- 4.13 You must not undertake activities that might prejudice, or be seen to prejudice, your professional integrity. To this end you must ensure that private research and publication, personal collecting interests, matters of financial gain or collaboration with the media do not conflict with or encroach upon your professional responsibilities and where appropriate are disclosed in advance to relevant clients and/or members of the public.
- 4.14 You must establish to the best of your ability that you are not agreeing to work on stolen or illicitly traded cultural objects, unprovenanced archaeological material or any items wrongfully taken, unless to establish wrong-doing or exceptionally to save the object from rapid ongoing deterioration.
- 4.15 You must contact authorities and the current custodian or owner if you uncover in the course of your work evidence that items could have been disguised, stolen or illicitly traded. If you hold a reasonable suspicion that the current possessor is not the rightful owner, relevant authorities must be informed.
- 4.16 You must observe legal requirements and obligations, including those relating to health, safety and environment, equal opportunities, financial, employment, contract and criminal law. You must also comply with relevant national and international standards pertaining to conservation and statutory site or building designations.
- 4.17 You must have relevant insurance cover, such as statutory employers' liability, public liability or professional indemnity. Insurance, with respect to damage or loss, of items or structures in your care must be agreed with the owner or custodian.

- 4.18 You must not disclose or use any information acquired in the course of your professional work that would contravene confidentiality, whether or not in signed agreements, data protection, patent or copyright legislation, unless there is a need to report to the police, relevant governmental or judicial authorities or a competent Court of Law.
- 4.19 You must treat colleagues, employees, interns, students and volunteers fairly and with dignity and respect in your professional practice and must not harass any such persons. For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, harassment means behaviour that is:
- (a) oppressive, tormenting, intimidating and offensive in terms of actions or words;
  - (b) deliberately impugning someone's professional and/or personal integrity;
  - or
  - (c) causing someone alarm or distress.
- 4.20 You must not denigrate maliciously or with the intention of personal gain other conservators or their work, whether members of Icon or not.
- 4.21 You must report apparent breaches of the Code of Conduct by another Icon member directly to the Icon office, but no member should do this to maliciously or recklessly injure or attempt to injure the reputation of another person. When there is evidence of criminal activity by an Icon member such activity should be reported directly to the appropriate authorities promptly.
- 4.22 Because every object in its context presents a unique challenge, interpretation of professional conduct can sometimes be difficult. If you are unsure as to what constitutes proper professional conduct you should seek advice from other conservators or relevant specialists to inform or support your proposed course of action.

## **5. Enforcement**

Any alleged contravention of the Code of Conduct may lead to investigation and, if appropriate, action under Icon's adopted Disciplinary Procedures.